



Beverly's Pat Abate is taken down by Classical's Stanley Smith (above) and Bryndyn Primus during last night's loss to Classical. ITEM PHOTO / REBA M. SALDANHA

## Classical football hangs on to defeat Beverly

**By Gordon Vincent/For The Item**

LYNN -- In a game of big plays, the biggest of play all ended up a half-yard short.

The Lynn Classical High football team turned back Beverly on fourth down at the Rams' 19-yard line with 2:38 left in the game to preserve an 18-13 win, Friday night, at Manning Field.

"It came down to that play and we were able to make it," Classical coach Matt Durgin said. "(Asst.) coach (Derek) Dana just told the kids to dig in, and they did."

Classical (2-0) held a tenuous 5-point lead when the Panthers (1-1) took over at the Rams' 40-yard line with 5:37 left in the fourth quarter. Beverly picked up 12 yards on two plays and then Greg Pierce (14 carries-215 yards) gained six to give the Panthers a second-and-four.

An illegal shift penalty knocked Beverly back five yards and then Classical's Tony Johnson took down Pierce for a loss of one yard to set up third-and-10. Mark Theriault scrambled for five, and Beverly called timeout before fourth down.

The call was a run off left-guard by Pierce, who came up about a half-yard short. Quivari Jackson, who accumulated 202 yards from scrimmage, ripped of a serpentine 53-yard run on the next play. The Rams picked up another first down four plays later and ran out the clock from there.

"The bottom line is we didn't pick up that first down when we needed to on that fourth down play," Beverly coach Dan Bauer said. "We didn't play very well in the first half, but I don't want to take anything away from Classical. They have a lot of speed and they tackled hard."

The Rams scored all their points in the first half, on a 48-yard pass from Alex Walter to Jackson, and a pair of runs by Cam Smith.

Beverly answered with two touchdowns from Pierce, on runs of 98 and 65 yards.

"We wanted to control the ball and keep their offense off their field," Durgin said. "We did a good job of that, but Pierce was still able to make a couple of big plays. He out-ran us twice, and we have good speed."

Classical cashed in on its first possession. Four plays into the drive, Watler threw a pass that Jackson hauled in between two defenders in the middle of the field. He cut to the right and beat them both to the end zone. The PAT kick was no good and the Rams led, 6-0, just 4:19 into the game.

Classical drove to the Beverly 33 on its next drive, but Curtis Manuel picked off a pass intended for Jackson at the 2-yard line. On the next play, Pierce broke through a gaping hole and raced all the way to the end zone. Beverly's PAT kick also failed and the score was 6-6 with 1:37 left in the first quarter.

The Rams drove 55 yards in 10 plays on their next drive. The big play was a 17-yard pass from Watler to Jackson on fourth-and-five from the Panthers' 23. Smith bowled over two plays later to make the score 12-6.

Classical scored again on its next possession, another grinding effort that covered 71 yards in eight running plays. Smith ran the final 19 yards around left end to put the Rams on top, 18-6, with 2:20 left in the first half.

Beverly fumbled a chance to score at the Rams' 22 on its first drive of the third quarter, and then Classical turned the ball over on downs at Beverly's 35. Pierce took a pitchout to the right and broke into the secondary and then out-raced everyone to the left corner of the end zone. L Lazar Cuko's extra point kick made the score 18-13 with 8:28 left, setting the stage for the dramatic finish.

"We've got great respect for Beverly, so this is a big win for us," said Durgin, whose team had lost three straight to Beverly. "We grew up a bit tonight."